

5

Napoleon III and Italy

POINTS TO CONSIDER

It has already been established that France played a major role in the unification of Italy. This chapter examines the precise part played by France, and more especially by the Emperor Napoleon III, through the following sections:

- Louis Napoleon: romantic adventurer
- Louis Napoleon and the Roman Republic
- 'Doing something for Italy'
- Napoleon and the unification of Italy

There are two particularly important issues to grapple with. The first is why Napoleon III of France was interested in what was happening in Italy. Was this notorious conspirator and wheeler-dealer more concerned with the interests of his own country rather than those of Italy? The second concerns the effects his policies had. Was his input crucial to eventual Italian unification? Might unification have been achieved without French involvement?

Key dates

1849 July	Rome fell to French forces
1852 December	Louis Napoleon became Emperor Napoleon III
1858 January 14	Orsini tried but failed to assassinate Napoleon III
1858 July 21	Meeting at Plombières between Napoleon III and Cavour
1859	France and Piedmont went to war with Austria, winning the battles of Magenta and Solferino
1866 July 3	Battle of Königgrätz
August	Peace of Prague
1870 July	Start of the Franco-Prussian War
September 20	Italian troops entered Rome

Key question
What in Louis Napoleon's background made him a romantic adventurer?

1 | Louis Napoleon: Romantic Adventurer

The family of Napoleon Bonaparte (the Emperor Napoleon I) was exiled from France by the Vienna Settlement of 1815 (see page 8). Some of its members were in Italy during the winter of the revolutionary year 1830–1 (see page 23). Among them was the 22-year-old Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon I's nephew, who became involved in a wild and foolish scheme, involving the capture of the Pope's castle of Saint Angelo, to proclaim his cousin, the son of Napoleon I, as King of Italy. Since this cousin was in fact a prisoner of the Austrians, Louis Napoleon would have ruled as **regent** on his behalf. Yet the secret was not well kept and the authorities had little difficulty in discovering the plot and arresting those involved.

Louis Napoleon was expelled from Rome and went to join the rest of his family in Florence. Here he almost immediately became entangled in another conspiracy involving Modena and the Papal States. Clearly the young Louis Napoleon did not intend to lead a 'normal' life. He was full of romantic, impracticable dreams and schemes, but with perhaps genuine and certainly vague liberal ideas. Conspiracy, adventure and the search for power and prestige seemed to be part of his heritage.

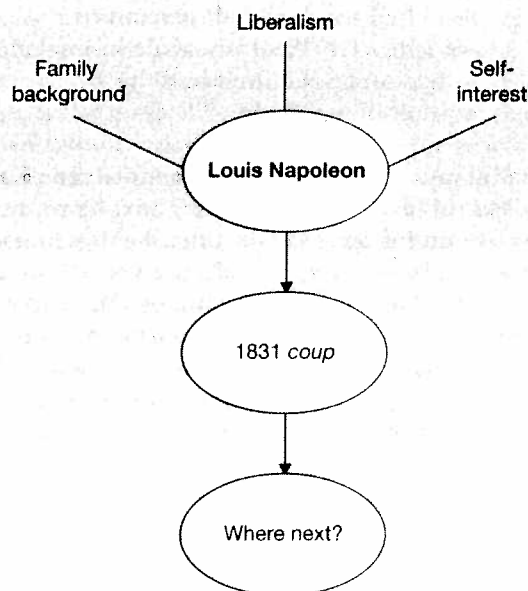
The conspiracies of 1830–1 mark the beginning of Louis Napoleon's love affair with Italian nationalism. Although his actions were often unpredictable, and although there was an element of self-interest in many of the things he did, it was to be with his aid, in the end, that Italian independence and unity were achieved in 1859–60 (see pages 62–7).

Key term

Regent

A person appointed to administer a state whose monarch is unable to do so.

Summary diagram: Louis Napoleon – romantic adventurer



Profile: Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon III 1808–73

1808		– Born in Paris, the third son Louis Bonaparte, the brother of Napoleon I. Brought up in exile in Switzerland
1831		– Expelled from Rome after attempted <i>coup</i>
1832		– Became head of the Napoleonic dynasty
1836 and 1840		– Involved in two failed <i>coups</i> in Paris
1848	December	– Elected President of the French Republic
1849	March–July	– His forces destroyed the Roman Republic
1852	December	– Became Emperor of France after a successful <i>coup</i> . At home, he encouraged economic expansion; abroad, he sought glory and prestige
1854–6		– Involved in Crimean War. He was on the winning side against Russia
1859		– Defeated Austria and furthered the cause of Italian independence
1860		– Gained Nice and Savoy for France
1862–5		– Intervention in Mexico ended in disaster
1870–1		– Franco-Prussian War
1871		– Went into exile in England, where he lived until his death
1873		– Died



Dynasty
A succession of powerful rulers from the same family.

Key term

Controversy has always surrounded the career of Louis Napoleon, especially the issue of his motives, including why he supported the cause of Italian unification. The fact that he was a member of the Bonaparte family is crucial here. 'When a man of my name is in power', he insisted, 'he must do great things'. At least he had to *try* to do great things. Also hotly debated is the level of ability he possessed. The leader of Prussia, and then Germany, Otto von Bismarck, was certainly not impressed with him. After one meeting he wrote the following about Napoleon III: 'Far afar, something; near at hand, nothing: a great, unfathomed incapacity'.

Key question
Why did Napoleon
destroy Mazzini's
regime in Rome?

Key date
Rome fell to French
forces: July 1849

Key terms
**Expeditionary
force**
A small army
dispatched for a
particular mission.
Clericalist
Supporting the
Catholic Church, its
clergy and its
policies.

2 | Louis Napoleon and the Roman Republic

In the 1830s Louis Napoleon's wish to help the Italians seemed sincere, but in March 1849, when the Roman Republic was proclaimed with Mazzini at its head and Garibaldi as its military leader (see page 37), he reacted very differently, as a counter-revolutionary rather than a supporter of nationalism. He was now no longer a hopeful rebel, having been elected President of the French Republic a few months earlier.

Pius IX fled Rome during the revolutions of 1848 and took refuge in Naples. He appealed to the Catholic monarchs of Europe, but no help came. Yet Louis Napoleon was prepared to act. He knew that the Austrians, who were already occupying Tuscany and the northern part of the Papal States, would soon be threatening Rome itself. There was no time to lose: he could benefit from the situation by restoring the Pope and winning the approval of the Church which would follow from this.

The French Assembly agreed to Napoleon's plan of providing an **expeditionary force** to be sent to Rome, and 10,000 troops set sail in April 1849. Their commander was well received when they landed in the Papal States near Rome and confidently expected a similar welcome from the citizens of Rome itself. He was not prepared for the strong resistance organised by Mazzini and Garibaldi. Louis Napoleon then agreed to an armistice, but only to buy time. A Bonaparte could not begin his Presidency of France with a military defeat or a meek compromise. Hence he reinforced his army, and soon over 20,000 French soldiers attacked. Rome fell in July.

The consequences

In a sense, Napoleon had succeeded. Papal rule had been restored, as he intended, the Austrians had been kept at bay, and at home he received support from **clericalist** forces. Yet the heir of the revolutionary Napoleon Bonaparte had made himself the champion of the most illiberal regime in Europe, that of Pope Pius IX, and Rome was quickly restored to the reactionary government of the papal governing body, the Curia.

The government of Rome was again as it had been: backward and oppressive. There were loud complaints in the French assembly at this betrayal of republican principles. What is more, Napoleon himself realised he had made a grave error. His first action in foreign policy had been to restore the temporal power of the papacy, which he himself, in 1830, had tried to remove. Such an action was unworthy of a Bonaparte. He would have to achieve more worthy successes in the future.

Summary diagram: Louis Napoleon and the Roman Republic

March 1849 – setting up of the Roman Republic

July 1849 – French troops ended the Republic

Louis Napoleon's motives:

- anti-Austrian move?
- need for a success?
- need to win clericalist support at home?

3 | 'Doing Something for Italy'

In December 1852 Napoleon assumed the title of Emperor Napoleon III. He declared that France wanted peace, but quickly found himself fighting against Russia in defence of Turkey in the Crimean War, which broke out in 1854. Among France's allies was Piedmont, and when the war ended, in 1856, Cavour too had a seat at the peace conference in Paris. This brought the two men into close contact, with important long-term consequences for them both. After the conference ended, they kept in touch through mutual friends and through Napoleon's nephew, a doctor who treated them both, Cavour's private secretary, and the young and beautiful **Countess Castiglione**.

Napoleon's intentions

On a number of occasions in the 1850s Napoleon spoke to Cavour about 'doing something for Italy' but did not explain what that something was. It is difficult to know what, if anything, he had in mind. Certainly, if he had any plans, they were at this stage vague and capable of being changed at any moment. And, of course, they were secret, making it extremely difficult to unravel them.

It is generally assumed that he saw his main enemy as being Austria, since Austria had taken the lead at the Congress of Vienna in undoing the work of Napoleon I (see page 9) and was the leading conservative power in Europe and the natural enemy of France. As part of his anti-Austrian policy, Napoleon III wished at least to weaken Austria's hold on northern Italy.

It may have been that, as a romantic but sincere supporter of Italian independence, Napoleon wished to be helpful to the cause. After all, in 1830 he had been a *Carbonaro* (see page 20), or something of the kind. He may also have been influenced by family tradition: Napoleon I had taken over Italy at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Hence the nephew would be continuing the Napoleonic legend. Although he had none of the qualities, the determination and the gifts of leadership that Napoleon I had possessed, he saw himself as a leader of 'the

Key question

What was the probable mix of motives that influenced Napoleon's actions in Italy?

Louis Napoleon became Emperor Napoleon III: December 1852

Key date

Countess Virginia di Castiglione 1837–99

A 19-year-old whom Cavour sent to Paris to seduce the Emperor. Napoleon slept with her, considering her 'very pretty but with no charm'.

Key figure

peoples of Europe' in their search for freedom and national identity. As for the episode of the Roman Republic in 1849, that was best forgotten.

Napoleon's self-interest

Yet it is very easy to see an element of self-interest in Napoleon's views. Admittedly he wished to drive the Austrians out of Italy and help to create an enlarged Piedmont. But this new Piedmont, though large enough to be a useful ally for France, should not become so large as to act independently of France, to oppose French wishes or to be a threat to France itself. It must certainly not be allowed to become strong enough to interfere with French ambitions to acquire Nice and Savoy. The return of these areas, once part of Napoleon I's territory, would be a tangible sign of

Napoleon III on horseback.



his success. According to his critics, Napoleon III simply wished to replace Austrian influence in Italy with French, and thus he was more a French imperialist than a true supporter of Italian nationalism – a criticism that had also been levelled against his uncle.

Napoleon's solution?

Also, we have to ask what Napoleon III meant when he talked about 'Italy'. Some historians believe that before 1861 'Italy' to him meant northern Italy, the old Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy, made up of states such as Piedmont, already substantially French in character as a consequence of the occupying forces at the beginning of the century, and where French was still the language of the educated minority. At this stage it is doubtful whether Napoleon would have wanted the whole Italian peninsula united into a single kingdom. After all, such a united country might become a threat to France itself.

What of central Italy? This could become part of the new Piedmont or a separate French-controlled state, perhaps governed by one of Napoleon's many cousins. Other cousins could rule Naples and Sicily. The Pope would be persuaded to agree to all these arrangements by being made President of an Italian Federation of States (see page 60).

This scenario seemed to Napoleon a splendid idea which would appeal to almost everyone:

- to Italian nationalists, because the Austrians had been driven out
- to moderate nationalists, as the old absolute governments would disappear
- to Victor Emmanuel and Cavour, as Piedmont would be expanded
- to the clergy, as the political power of the Pope would grow
- to French nationalists, by the acquisition of new territory and the replacement of Austrian influence in Italy by that of France
- to the Bonaparte family, by an extension of their power and prestige.

This arrangement might well have been Napoleon's ideal solution to the Italian question. But would the French Emperor be motivated enough to attempt to make it a reality?

The Orsini affair

Napoleon moved into action in January 1858, when an attempt was made on his life. A group of four Italians, led by **Count Felice Orsini**, was responsible. Orsini had been a refugee in London, where he had had three large bombs specially made for him. The men took the bombs from London to Paris via Brussels, by train, completely outwitting the French police who had been tipped off that they would be arriving by road. The bombs were thrown at Napoleon and the Empress Eugénie as their coach arrived at the opera. Eight people died and about 150 were injured, but the Emperor and his wife were unharmed.

Count Felice Orsini 1819–58

An Italian patriot and follower of Mazzini, had been elected a member of the Roman assembly in 1848 and, under Garibaldi, had taken part in the defence of the city against the French. He was executed after the assassination attempt.

Key figure

Key question

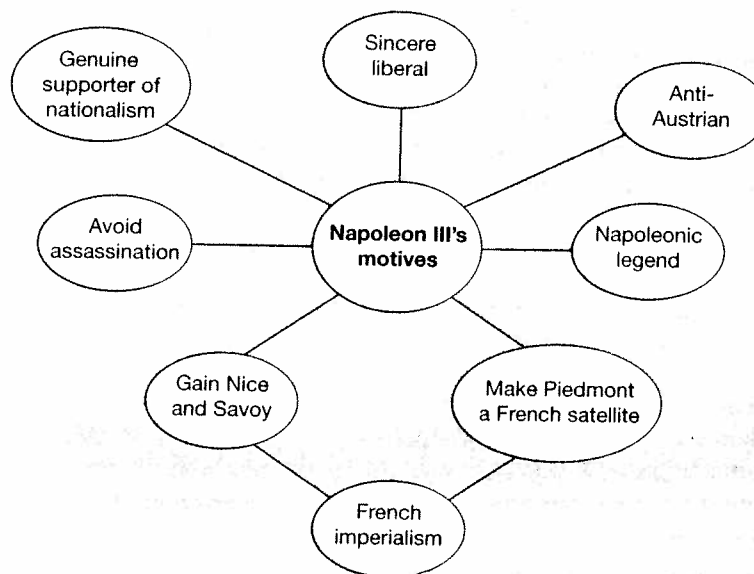
Why did the assassination plot on his life lead Napoleon to take up the cause of Italian nationalism?

Orsini tried but failed to assassinate Napoleon III:
14 January 1858

Key date

Orsini seems to have believed that if he killed Napoleon a new republican government in France would come to the assistance of Italy. At his trial, a letter, said to have been written by Orsini in his prison cell, was read out. In it Orsini appealed to Napoleon to help Italy to achieve independence and by doing so to receive the blessings of 25 million Italian citizens. There is some evidence that Napoleon himself encouraged Orsini to write this letter and may even have dictated its contents. He certainly arranged for it to be published. It is still not known whether the letter was a genuine plea from an Italian patriot or whether it was organised by Napoleon to provide him with an excuse to intervene in Italy.

Summary diagram: 'Doing something for Italy'



Key question
How crucial was French support to the growth and eventual unification of Italy?

4 | Napoleon and the Unification of Italy

The war against Austria 1859

Napoleon wasted no time. Perhaps he was genuinely impressed by Orsini's letter. Perhaps he feared that, unless he took action, further assassination attempts might be made. Perhaps he just saw the opportunity to gain prestige. In any event, he would now do something for Italy, and for France.

He began by meeting Cavour at Plombières on 21 July 1858, where they hatched the plot to try to lure Austria into war (see pages 59–61). Napoleon agreed that providing a suitable excuse for war could be devised, he would support Piedmont in an attempt to drive the Austrians out of northern Italy. The result was the war of 1859 and an expanded Piedmont. Events did not work out as smoothly as Napoleon had hoped, however. In particular, the battles – at Solferino and Magenta – proved far more destructive than anticipated, while Piedmont became more

Key dates
Meeting at Plombières between Napoleon III and Cavour: 21 July 1858
France and Piedmont went to war with Austria, winning battles of Magenta and Solferino: 1859

powerful than he had expected. But at least France received Nice and Savoy and Austrian power in Italy was greatly weakened (see pages 62–5 for details of the ‘Second War of Independence’).

Garibaldi and Rome

After Garibaldi’s successful conquest of Sicily in July 1860 (see page 89), the European powers woke up to the fact that he clearly intended to attack the Neapolitan mainland. Should he be allowed to do so? This was the question being asked in diplomatic circles everywhere.

In a flurry of activity only Britain among the Great Powers had any sympathy with Garibaldi’s aims. Napoleon found himself in difficulties. He did not want to offend Britain by trying to stop Garibaldi, but he did not want to see Garibaldi take over Naples and threaten Rome and the Pope. He suggested to Britain a **naval blockade** of the Straits of Messina to make it impossible for Garibaldi to leave Sicily for the mainland. But Britain refused and Garibaldi crossed the Straits successfully in the middle of August, meeting only token resistance from the Neapolitan navy.

When Cavour’s army entered the Papal States on 11 September to prevent Garibaldi and his army from reaching Rome, Napoleon had to disapprove in public of what was no less than the unprovoked invasion of a neighbouring state. However, he had made a secret agreement with Cavour that France would not interfere as long as Garibaldi did not reach Rome. French diplomatic relations with Piedmont were broken off, but this seems to have been a gesture by Napoleon and not meant to be taken seriously. He did nothing to prevent the degree of Italian unification that was complete by 1860: the whole of the peninsula, apart from Venetia and Rome, became part of Victor Emmanuel II’s kingdom of Italy.

Venetia and Rome

Venetia

In 1866 the question of Venetia came to a head. First, in April, Italy signed an alliance with Prussia, whose prime minister, Otto von Bismarck, was engaged in a struggle with Austria for control of Germany. Italy agreed that if Prussia went to war with Austria within the next few months, Italy would follow Prussia and declare war on Austria.

Secondly, Napoleon III signed a secret treaty with Bismarck in June. Not only would France remain neutral in an Austro-Prussian war, but at the end of the conflict France would receive Venetia if Austria were defeated. This would then be given by Napoleon to Italy as a reward for providing a **second front** in the Austro-Prussian war. Once again Napoleon III would be the sponsor of Italian nationalism, winning the gratitude of an Italian government which, he hoped, would be compliant to French wishes. Furthermore, he would gain international prestige by his generosity in favour of a liberal cause.

Key question

What was Napoleon’s attitude to Garibaldi’s successes in southern Italy?

Naval blockade

The use of ships to prevent people or goods entering or leaving ports.

Second front

An alternative scene of battle, generally diverting the enemy’s attention from the major focus of a war.

Key terms

Key question

What role did Napoleon III play in adding Venetia and Rome to the new Italian state?

Knowing now that Italy would receive Venetia if Prussia won, Napoleon – with great diplomatic skill and also total lack of principle, the two often going together – needed to make sure that the same thing would happen if Austria won. He therefore signed a secret treaty with Austria in which it was agreed that if Austria defeated Prussia, Venetia would be ceded to France and passed on by Napoleon to Italy. In return France would remain neutral during the war.

The war of 1866

The war, known in Germany as the Seven Weeks' War and in Italy as the Third War of Independence, began on 24 June 1866. Italian confidence was high, but their army was defeated by a smaller Austrian force at the (second) battle of Custoza 10 days later, largely owing to poor Italian generalship. But this was really no more than a side-show.

The decisive battle was fought on 3 July by Austria and Prussia at Königgrätz, also known as Sadowa. It was a horrific encounter. According to an eyewitness account, bombs crashed around the Prussian soldiers 'through walls of clay as if they were cardboard ... Chunks of wood and big tree splinters flew around our heads.' Austrian soldiers too suffered when 4000 men set out to attack the Prussian guns, a venture from which only 1800 badly wounded men returned. Many Austrian soldiers tried to reach the safety of the town of Königgrätz, only to be drowned in water released from the waterworks which protected the town. As before, there was inadequate provision for looking after the wounded, who were left lying for up to three days on the 45 square miles of the battlefield. The Prussians lost almost 2000 men, the Austrians nearer 6000.

The war came to an end with the Peace of Prague in August 1866. By it, Austria immediately gave up Venetia to Napoleon, who in turn surrendered it, as agreed, to Italy.

Welcome as the return of Venetia was, there was a feeling of humiliation in Italy about the way in which it had been done, not by Italians, but only as the result of action by the Great Powers of Austria, Prussia and France. At least Italians could console themselves with the thought that, once Rome was also recovered, Italian unification would be complete.

Key dates

Battle of Königgrätz:
3 July 1866
Peace of Prague:
August 1866
Start of the Franco-
Prussian War: July
1870

Key question

By what process was
Rome added to Italy?

Rome

The outstanding problem now was how to get rid of the French garrison in Rome. Only then would the work of driving out the foreigners be complete. How could it be done? Again success stemmed not from Italy's own strength but from the international situation.

In 1870 the Franco-Prussian War broke out. Conflict had been brewing between the two rival powers for some time, and in July Bismarck skilfully manoeuvred Napoleon III into declaring war on Prussia, a conflict that the Prussian leader used to whip up nationalist feeling and to unify Germany.

In an unexpected piece of good fortune for Italy, very soon after the war began Napoleon needed reinforcements to bring his army up to strength and so withdrew his troops from Rome. The Italian government made no immediate move to take over the city, but after 1 September 1870 – when Napoleon was heavily defeated at the battle of Sedan and was taken prisoner by the Prussians – they felt it safe to take action.

Victor Emmanuel, whose daughter was married to Napoleon's cousin, felt that he ought to send an army to rescue Napoleon, but his government thought otherwise. Italy had been neutral in the war and must remain so. This did not mean, though, that they could not take advantage of Napoleon's misfortunes to settle the question of Rome once and for all.

On 8 September Victor Emmanuel sent a letter to the Pope suggesting an agreement. The Pope would have to give up his temporal power, which since 1849 had depended on the support of the French troops in Rome, and allow Rome to become at last the capital of a united Italy. In return he would be allowed to keep his spiritual power as head of the Church which would be safeguarded and guaranteed by the Italian state.

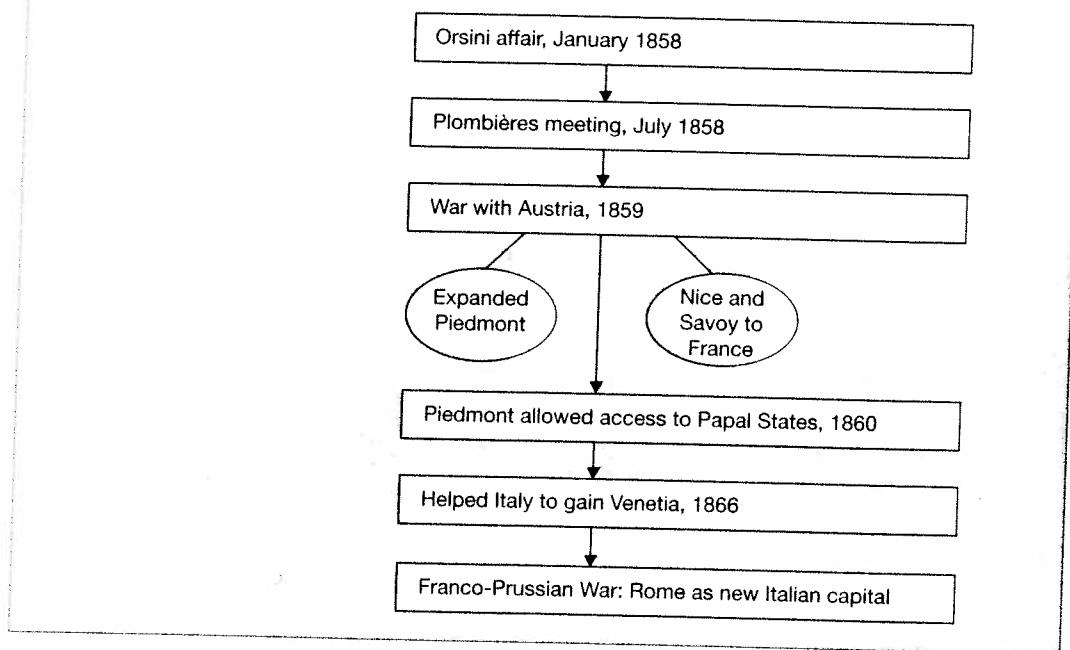
Three days later the Pope rejected this arrangement. As a result, the government decided to act. An army of 6000 troops was sent to occupy Rome. Papal troops fought back briefly but the city was shelled by government artillery and a breach made in the walls. On 20 September 1870 Victor Emmanuel's army entered Rome. In October Roman citizens voted overwhelmingly (by 133,681 to 1507) for union with the rest of Italy, and Rome became the capital city of a politically and geographically united Italy.

The new Kingdom of Italy seemed to be complete. That it was still severely flawed socially, economically and politically was not acknowledged, least of all by 'King Victor Emmanuel II of Italy' (not, it should be noted, King Victor Emmanuel I, although he was the first king of a united Italy). At the first session of the first parliament to be held in the new capital, disregarding the still unsolved problem of what to do about the Pope, the king declared: 'The work to which we consecrated our lives is accomplished'.

Italian troops entered
Rome: 20 September
1870

Key date

Summary diagram: Napoleon and the unification of Italy



Study Guide: AS Questions

In the style of AQA

- (a) Explain why Napoleon III wanted to 'do something for Italy' in the 1850s. (12 marks)
- (b) 'Napoleon III was the true champion of Italian unification between 1859 and 1870.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (24 marks)

Exam tips

The cross-references are intended to take you straight to the material that will help you to answer the questions.

- (a) Start by re-reading pages 110–12 and making a list of factors which could explain Napoleon's interest in the Italian question:

- his enmity towards Austria
- his sincere support for Italian unification
- his desire to have Piedmont as an ally
- his quest for prestige
- his desire for more territory
- his wish to curry favour with the Pope
- the Orsini affair.

You will probably want to argue that some of these reasons are more important than others and there may be some you wish to dismiss. Decide your priorities before you begin writing and don't forget to show the links between the factors. You should also provide an overall conclusion.

- (b) This question is asking you to assess Napoleon III's contribution to Italian unification by considering one interpretation of his actions. You will need to think of ways in which Napoleon III was involved in the moves towards unification in these years and decide whether they agree or disagree with the statement. You might include:

- The French war against Austria, undertaken to support Piedmont but concluded before Piedmont had achieved its aims.
- Napoleon III was determined to prevent Garibaldi entering Rome, although he allowed Cavour to enter the Papal States in September 1860 (pages 109–13) and didn't stop unification in 1860.
- In 1866 his actions allowed Venetia to be incorporated into the united Italy, but he had his own agenda (pages 114–15).
- He allowed the incorporation of Rome, but only after he was forced to withdraw troops; hardly a championing of a cause.

You might want to consider how far Napoleon III's actions reflect a championing of the Italian cause and how far they were undertaken with French interests first and foremost (pages 110–11).

In the style of Edexcel

To what extent did France promote the unification of Italy from 1848 to 1870? (30 marks)

Exam tips

The cross-references are intended to take you straight to the material that will help you to answer the question.

France was vital to the process of Italian unification. Within the 1848–70 time-frame, the following episodes are clearly important:

- The ending of the Roman Republic by French troops in 1849 (see pages 37–8).
- The 1858–60 period when Napoleon III and Cavour agreed to work together and fought the war of 1859 against Austria. Napoleon also turned a blind eye when Cavour moved Piedmont's troops through the Papal States in order to head off Garibaldi (see pages 113–14).
- Napoleon's help in securing Venetia for Italy, as a result of the 1866 Austro-Prussian war (see pages 114–15).
- The Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1, which saw French troops leave Rome.

You will need to mention all of the above, but do not forget that the question focuses on the extent to which France actually *promoted* Italian unification. France's actions, as in its withdrawal from Rome in 1870, may have served the cause of Italian unity, but Napoleon III may not have consciously sought this unity. The key years are 1858–60, and here you should not only say what happened but also comment on the French Emperor's motives. Was he trying to promote French interests in Italy, aiming to secure an expanded Piedmont as a French client state (see pages 110–11)?

Finally, as this is a 'to what extent' question, you should weigh up France's promotion of Italian unity alongside the other factors involved, including Italians' promotion of Italian unity. How relatively important was the French connection?

In the style of OCR

Study the four sources and then answer **both** sub-questions. It is recommended that you spend two-thirds of your time in answering part (b).

(a) Study Sources A and B.

Compare these sources as evidence for the role Italians expected France to play in Italy. (30 marks)

(b) Study all the sources.

Use your own knowledge to assess how far the sources support the interpretation that Napoleon III was an obstacle to the unification of Italy. (70 marks)

Source A

From: Felice Orsini in a letter to Napoleon III. The Italian revolutionary nationalist explains the Italian situation to the French Emperor in February 1858.

You have destroyed liberty in my country. However, in the present state of Europe you can decide whether Italy is free or the slave of Austria. I would not ask that French blood should be shed for Italians. Instead, we ask that France should not intervene against us, and should not allow other nations to intervene in the struggle against Austria. The happiness or unhappiness of my country depends on you. I beg you to give Italy again the independence that Frenchmen helped her to lose in 1849. Neither Europe nor Your Majesty can expect peace until Italy is free.

Source B

From: the terms of the agreement made between Piedmont and France following discussions at Plombières, July 1858. The Franco-Piedmontese Treaty, January 1859.

- Article 1 If aggression by Austria leads to war between Piedmont and Austria an alliance will come into force between France and Piedmont.
- Article 2 The alliance will aim to liberate Italy from Austrian occupation, to satisfy the wishes of the people to create a Kingdom of Upper Italy and bring peace to Europe.
- Article 3 Savoy and Nice will be reunited with France.
- Article 4 The interests of the Catholic religion and the sovereignty of the Pope shall be maintained.
- Article 5 The cost of war will be met by Italy.
- Article 6 Neither side will make peace without the agreement of the other.

Source C

From: L. Seaman, From Vienna to Versailles, published in 1955. A modern historian assesses the contribution of Napoleon III to Italian unification.

The Villafranca proposals dissatisfied the Piedmontese, yet secured for them more than they could have got if Napoleon had stayed at home. Also, the decisions of Napoleon achieved the annexation of Lombardy and ensured that the Duchies and the Romagna were not returned to their legitimate rulers. The work of Cavour in the north and the centre of Italy up to April 1860 depended completely on Napoleon's initiative in attacking the Habsburgs. Garibaldi's verdict after Villafranca was fair: 'Do not forget the gratitude we owe to Napoleon.'

Source D

A cartoon comments on the armistice at Villafranca in July 1859. The figures (from left to right) represent Austria, Italy and France. From Punch, 23 July 1859.



FREE ITALY (?)

Source: adapted from OCR, June 2007

Exam tips

Read the 'General Introduction' section at the start of the study guide in Chapter 2, page 46.

- (a) Remember what the question asked you to do: compare these two sources 'as evidence for the role Italians expected the French to play', so stick to that – comparison of points that do not provide such evidence may be true but will be irrelevant.

While both agree that France will support the Italians in the struggle that would be necessary to expel Austria if Italy was to be free, various differences can be discussed – the objective is the creation of a Kingdom of Italy (Source A) versus the less ambitious objective of the creation of a Kingdom of North Italy

(Source B); France should (Source A) or should not (Source B) intervene to bring about Italian independence; Italy will fight alone for independence (Source A) or French troops will help by fighting in Piedmont (Source B).

Consider the significance of the date of each. You should also use provenance and context to help to explain these differences: Orsini in Source A reflects the romantic idealism of revolutionary Italian nationalists like the followers of Mazzini and Young Italy, whereas Source B represents the more practical position of Italian politicians like Cavour, negotiating an international treaty. For Orsini the idealist (Source A), Italy will act alone and France is a potential obstacle that must be persuaded to remain neutral, whereas Cavour (Source B) has learned from the failures of 1848–9 and knows that external assistance will be essential to success in the coming struggle with Austria. Further, Orsini (Source A) is trying to catch Napoleon's interest and persuade the French ruler by appealing to his self-interest whereas the very precise, functional details of Source B are explained by the fact that it follows the agreement already made at Plombières in 1858. Thus the Piedmontese politician and nationalist Cavour (Source B) focuses on a northern Italian state and is willing to leave the Papal States alone and to surrender Nice and Savoy to France. The scales of the ambition shown for the new Italy in Sources A and B are thus very different.

Don't wander off the question by explaining Orsini's background or his fate.

- (b) Read the whole question properly. Don't see the words 'own knowledge' and then ignore the sources and wander off into an 'ordinary' essay. The command is very clear: 'Use your own knowledge to assess how far the sources support the interpretation ...'.

Group the sources according to what they say, what they agree on and what they disagree on, and then test each aspect against what you know. Sources A and D see Napoleon as an obstacle while Sources B and C illustrate his positive role in unification. Which view makes for a better fit with the facts, and why?

Now look again at that grouping. If you read Sources A and B carefully, both can be used either way in this argument. Sources A, B and C show Napoleon obstructing unification at Villafranca, while Sources A and D show it again over Rome. On the other hand, Sources A, B and C testify to Napoleon's help, especially in 1859. So, you need to offer a more sophisticated answer than 'yes' or 'no'.

So what of your 'own knowledge' can you bring into play to help you decide 'how far'? On Napoleon as an obstacle, perhaps the obvious starting point is to consider what Napoleon agreed to at Villafranca against the treaty that he had made earlier that year after Plombières (Source B). You could link this to the Treaty of Zurich that he then made, depriving Piedmont of the Duchies and two of the quadrilateral fortresses, Mantua and Peschiera, and

threatening further Italian unification with a proposed European Congress.

What about the reference to helping Italy to lose its independence in 1849 (Source A)? You could judge the accuracy of that by considering the event it refers to – the army of 20,000 that Napoleon sent to destroy the Roman Republic and restore papal rule. Might the revolutionary nationalist Orsini exaggerate? If he does, the cartoon (Source D) makes exactly the same point about Napoleon: he is more interested in supporting the Catholic Church than in uniting Italy; Article 4, which he insisted upon (Source B), could also be used in support. You could go on to refer to the French garrison in Rome until 1870, and the reinforcements that Napoleon sent in 1867 against Garibaldi's attempt to take the city and add it to the Italian kingdom. Napoleon kept Rome out of Italy throughout the 1860s.

Don't forget the other side of the issue. What of Napoleon's help in bringing about Italian unification? Source C is very strongly in favour of such a view, and we have already noted that Sources A, B and D all have parts that support such an interpretation. Orsini (Source A), the man who had tried to assassinate Napoleon, argues that everything depends on the French emperor while the quotation from Garibaldi in Source C is very powerful evidence from a central nationalist figure that Napoleon had indeed fulfilled that hope. Garibaldi's opinion must be taken seriously. What do you know that explains Garibaldi's assertion? You could refer to the key role played by the provision of 20,000 French troops in 1859 and their critical role in the battles that year while, in contrast, noting that Piedmont's army suffered defeats in 1848, 1849 and 1866. On the battlefield, self-help (*Italia farà da sé*) was not going to win freedom. You could go on to point out Napoleon's key role in supporting the Italian annexation of Venetia in 1865. Garibaldi had in mind the military and diplomatic help that Napoleon gave to Italy in 1859 and in 1865–6. Obstacle or asset? Clearly he was both. You have to decide how the balance tips between the one and the other.

As a final note. In evaluating the cartoon (Source D), stick to the point. Examiners see plenty of irrelevant text (e.g. in this case, comments on moustaches or Napoleon's weight, which have nothing to do with answering the question). What can you say about it? It makes a strong condemnation of Napoleon's behaviour at Villafranca – look at Italy, still chained to Austria; look at the oversize papal crown that dwarfs Italy and will weigh it down. Equally, you should note that the cartoon is from Britain, a country strongly pro-Italian unification and strongly anti-Catholic, so it hardly takes a neutral view. But that is the value of cartoons for historians – they put over a simplified message, in exaggerated form, to make their point, so they are excellent ways for us to test the temperature and know just how strong the views were (prejudices) of one key group or another. Their very bias makes them such useful evidence.